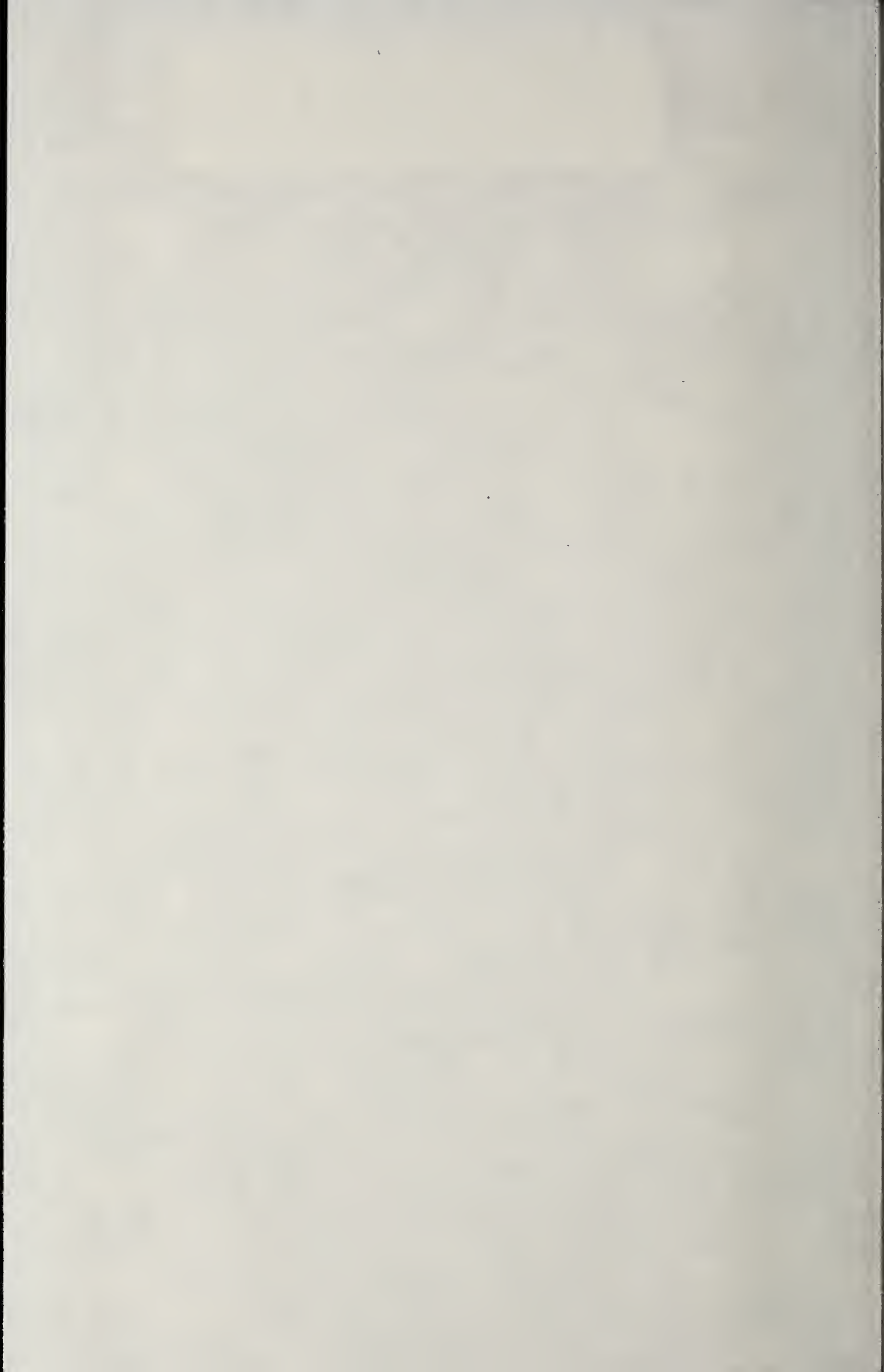




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Colonel David Crockett



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COLONEL DAVID CROCKETT

Colonel David Crockett
by
D.M.Kelsey

Allen County Public Library
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One of a historical series, this pamphlet is published under the direction of the governing Boards of the Public Library of Fort Wayne and Allen County.

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FOREWORD

Television programs, books, movies, songs, and coonskin caps reflect the current popularity of Davy Crockett. In the century since Crockett's death in the defense of the Alamo, forty "Crockett Almanacs," numerous biographies, and a hit play have enhanced Davy's stature as a backwoods superman.

The following sketch outlines the career of Crockett in fact and legend. It appeared originally in OUR PIONEER HEROES AND THEIR DARING DEEDS by D. M. Kelsey. The Boards and the Staff of the Public Library of Fort Wayne and Allen County present this publication with the assurance that it will be interesting and informative to Library patrons.

EVERY newspaper issued to-day chronicles the life of the nation, as made up of innumerable individual lives; but fifty years ago each journal told of a few prominent individuals, leaving to the reader the task of constructing a whole from these parts. Hero worship is dying out of the newspapers and the political party; it is no longer enthusiasm for a soldier or a statesman, but the policy of the party, or, perhaps, the "machine," which controls elections. Such was not the case a half century ago; then it was personal prejudice that defeated a candidate, or personal preference that elected him. Such were the days of Col. David Crockett, the earliest of American humorists, whose quaint sayings were household words—or equally venerable newspaper paragraphs—before Mark Twain was born.

John Crockett, the father of David, was born in Ireland or on the passage to this country. He was a soldier in the American army during the whole period of the Revolution. Either he was married before the war began, or an opportune furlough enabled him to woo and win Rebecca Hawkins, a native of Maryland; for their fifth son, David, was born August 17, 1786. The family had lived for a time in North Carolina, but had, at some time before this date, moved to Greene County, as it is now called, in East Tennessee. This was then a wild and partly settled country, where the Indians gave considerable trouble. Shortly after the removal of the Crockett family, the Creeks murdered John Crockett's parents, wounded one son, and carried into captivity another. This captive uncle of our hero remained among the Indians for nearly eighteen years; the fact that he was a deaf mute rendering it difficult for him to escape. He was finally recognized and purchased by two of his brothers.

Such was their poverty, and so far in the wilderness was their home, that John Crockett and his wife could not give their chil-

dren any tuition at school for a long time ; to this lack of schooling is probably due that dislike and contempt of the most famous of them for "this way of spelling contrary to nature." Each of them probably acquired a goodly share of shrewd common sense by the part which he was obliged to take in active life.

John Crockett seems to have been one of those unfortunate men whose business ventures always fail. "A rolling stone gathers no moss," and in seven or eight years from the time of his son David's birth, he had moved, changing his business with each removal, no less than three times. The last time, he settled in Jefferson County, and opened a small tavern on the road between Abingdon and Knoxville. The accommodations were of the kind best appreciated by the wagoners who were continually going to and fro between these places. The tavern was on such a small scale that David had almost entire charge of the horses belonging to the guests; a task that at times was arduous, but to which he soon looked back longingly.

There came to the little tavern one evening a Dutchman, named Jacob Siler, who said that he was moving from Knoxville to Rockbridge, Virginia, about four hundred miles off. He wanted some one to help him with the cattle that he had with him, and John Crockett hired his twelve year old son to go with this stranger that long distance on foot. David was very kindly treated by his master, who professed himself very much pleased with the services of his young assistant; but so strong was the boy's attachment to his home that he never once lost sight of the idea of returning. In order, however, that this hope might ever be realized, he was obliged to conceal it.

After what seemed an age to the impatience of youth, but which was really four or five weeks, he espied, while playing with some companions near the road, three wagoners who had often stopped at his father's tavern. He told them his pitiful tale of homesickness, and they said that they would stop at a tavern seven miles from there that night, and leave at dawn the next morning; that if he would be at that place before day, they would take him along with them, and defend him if his master pursued. Between his anxiety to be at home, and his dread of pursuit, the boy slept but little, and arose three hours before day-break. When he started, the snow was about eight inches deep, and still falling; no moon shone, and an opening through the timber was the only road. Cheered by the thought that it was

the way home, and anxious lest he should be too late to overtake the wagoners, the little hero plodded on, the snow, in the latter part of his journey, being up to his knees; and arrived about an hour before day-light. He was at first fearful of pursuit, but the drifting snow had obliterated all trace of his foot-prints.

He journeyed on in company with the wagoners, until they reached a house on Roanoke, where he left them, intending to pursue the rest of the way on foot, as he would thus arrive at home much sooner. Meeting with a strange gentleman who invited him to ride upon a led horse, he accepted the offer, and they continued together until they reached a point fifteen miles from the little tavern, where the road diverged. Although the name of this stranger did not linger long in the boy's memory, the kindness was never forgotten, but was mentioned nearly fifty years after with gratitude.

He lived at home until the next fall, when his father sent the boys to a school recently opened in the neighborhood by a certain Benjamin Kitchen. But his attendance here was not of long duration. Having had, on the fourth day, a falling out with one of the larger boys, David, who was just getting a good grip on the alphabet, slipped out while the more advanced pupils were spelling, and hid himself in the bushes by the roadside. As soon as school was over, and the other boy came along the road, young Crockett sprang upon him like a wild-cat, and soon made him cry for quarter. But the victor felt himself not invincible by the superior strength of the schoolmaster, and decided to forego learning for a time. This was a resolution not to be announced at home, however; so, having persuaded his brothers to keep his secret, they, as usual, left the house together the next morning, as if all were going to school; but David left them as soon as they were out of sight of the house, and spending the day in the woods, returned with them in the afternoon.

For a few days the plan worked admirably, but soon the schoolmaster sent a note of inquiry to David's parents. The father had been drinking just enough to make him cross. In answer to his questions the boy told the whole story, saying that he knew that "Kitchen would cook him up to a cracklin' in no time." He was soon aware, however, that he would not meet with any support at home, for his father said:

"I'll whip you a 'tarnal sight worse'n the master if you don't start off to school right now."

The boy tried hard to beg off, but vainly. Seeing his father cut a stout hickory, he judged it was about time to put a little greater distance between them; off he ran, *not* towards the school-house, chased hotly by the irate old man; but he succeeded in giving the slip to the hickory rod, and did not return home for nearly three years. Often, he says, did he wish to be at home again, but the dread of Schoolmaster Kitchen and his father's big hickory kept him away. Going back, he was not recognized for some time, nor did he make himself known. They had given him up as dead, and when his sister, startled by some familiar gesture or smile, proclaimed that the lost was found, such was the joy of all that he would rather have submitted to a hundred whippings than have remained away longer.

The whole of the ensuing year was spent in working out two debts of his father's, the entire sum being seventy-six dollars. The second term of this service was with an honest old Quaker, John Kennedy, for whom he continued to work after the expiration of the fixed time, in order to provide himself with clothes. During this service, a pretty niece of the old Quaker's came to visit him, and young Crockett fell violently in love. The warmth of his affection was equalled only by his bashfulness, but at last he "screwed his courage to the sticking-place," and, with the usual threats of dying of grief if his love were not returned, he laid bare his heart to the lady. It was in vain, however, for she told him that she was engaged to her cousin, young Kennedy, and Davy reconsidered the idea of going into a decline, deciding that, as his troubles probably came from the lack of learning, he had better go to school.

For six months, then, he attended a school kept by John Kennedy's married son, working two days in the week to pay for his tuition the other four, and for his board. Having learned to read a little in the primer, to write his own name, and gotten as far as the multiplication table, he decided that he could not possibly do without a wife any longer, and quitting school, immediately set about providing himself. An old playmate was his choice, and after some evasion and delay, she accepted his offer, and a day was set for the wedding, the bridegroom-elect being about eighteen.

He had purchased a rifle, and was frequently a competitor in the shooting-matches for beef. One Saturday he set out to one of these gatherings, intending to go on towards the lady's home af-

terwards. In fact, he had some important business there, as they were to be married the next Saturday, and he had not yet asked the consent of her parents. Of his success in this direction, however, he had not the slightest doubt, and his good opinion of himself was not lessened by the fact that he won nearly the whole beef by his skill with the rifle. Disposing of his prize for five dollars, he walked onward, stopping on the way at the house of his sweetheart's uncle. Here he found her sister, who, with considerable regret, told him that he was being deceived; that his



DAVID CROCKETT.

promised bride would marry some one else the next day; but that, although the successful rival had asked for the lady and had secured the license, her parents, she knew, would much prefer David, and if he would only go onward to her father's house, he might yet break off the match. David declined to do so, however, not wishing, perhaps, to force himself upon her.

Once again he was disconsolate, and might have remained so a longer time, if a girl whom he describes as so ugly that it hurt one's eyes to look at her had not taken pity on him, and introduced him at a reap-

ing to a pretty little Irish girl, with whom, of course, he was soon in love as deeply as ever. To make a long story short, they were married, in spite of the opposition of her mother. Finding that no one else objected, the mother-in-law at last relented, and gave them two cows and calves towards settling in life; they rented a cabin and a little ground; John Kennedy gave them an order on a store for fifteen dollars' worth of household goods; "Adam delved and Eve spun," and by dint of hard work they made a living for themselves and the two sons born to them soon. But renting ground was poor policy; so in 1809 they removed across the mountains to Lincoln county, where game was still plentiful, and where he laid the foundation

of his fame as a hunter. After a two years' residence here, they moved again, this time to Franklin County.

In 1813, the Creek Indians, living in Alabama and Georgia, being incited to hostilities by the British and Spanish, surprised Fort Mimms, forty miles north of Mobile, and massacred the garrison, numbering about three hundred persons. There was no mistaking the meaning of this; the Creeks felt themselves strong enough to drive the whites out of the country. A call for volunteers speedily followed, and the hunter felt the wild passion that leads a man to the field of battle raging in his breast. His wife would have persuaded him to remain with her and their boys, but he answered:

"If every man waits until his wife tells him to go to war, we will all stay here and be murdered in our own homes."

To this argument she had no reply, and when the muster was held at Winchester a few days later, her husband was the second or third man who stepped forward to enlist. Thirteen hundred mounted volunteers joined Gen. Jackson's command, being enrolled for sixty days. At the end of two months, however, the war was by no means over, and many of them re-enlisted. Crockett distinguished himself, not only as a scout and a spy, but as a brave man in open battle. His skill in hunting proved of material assistance to his comrades, for open-hearted as he was, when he had anything to share, no one around him lacked.

Shortly after, he met with the misfortune of the death of his wife. Left with three children, the youngest a mere baby, he at first committed them to the care of his brother's wife; but however good, it was not a mother's, and he undertook to supply the deficiency in another way. A widow of one of his comrades lived near by, and to her he suggested a union of their two families. Her two children were as small as his, and each seems to have adopted the other's quite cheerfully.

The succeeding years were filled with events of comparatively slight importance. Crockett continued to increase in popularity, the elements of which lay in his readiness to share with all comers, his perpetual good humor, his fund of anecdote, and, when this failed him, his capacity for ready invention; above all, by his instant recognition of the merest chance acquaintance. There is nothing which gives a man so favorable an impression of another as that ability of the other to call him by name without hesitation. We are well-disposed towards those whom we impress.

Removing to Laurens county, he found there a most primitive state of society. Thinking that some sort of restraint would be necessary, the men of the community met to elect magistrates and constables. The election took place in due form, Crockett being made magistrate; but they omitted the making of laws, leaving that entirely to the discretion of their chosen officials. The law as thus administered was somewhat informal, as may be imagined. Justice Crockett's warrants were in what he called "verbal writing;" that is, he would say to his constable, when any one was noted as an offender:

"Catch that fellow and bring him here."

Justice and constable considered this sufficient; and it is to be supposed that the criminal did, too, for he usually allowed himself to be brought. The Assembly added their settlement to those in Giles county, and decreed that the justices must make out their warrants in "real writing," and keep written records. These were hard lines to one who could hardly write his own name, but by dint of perseverance he succeeded in learning to write more easily, and to keep his records without much difficulty. Then, too, he was ably seconded by his constable, whom he empowered to fill out warrants when he thought it necessary, without reference to his chief. But the judgments he delivered were never appealed from, for all the irregularity that there may have been in getting at them; since they were formed on common-sense, justice and honesty.

One honor led to another, for so did his office of magistrate raise him in his own opinion, that he was a willing candidate for their positions. A short time before a certain military election, he was urged by a Capt. Matthews to run for major of a regiment; he at first refused, saying that he had had enough of military life; but so strong became the persuasions of Matthews, who said that he intended to offer for colonel, and would do everything in his power to advance his friend, that Crockett yielded. Finding, however, that in spite of these protestations of friendship and offers of assistance, Matthews' son intended to run for the post of major, our hero's usual good nature failed him, and thinking that, if he had to contend with the family, it might as well be with the head of it, he concluded that he would prefer to be colonel. When the election was over, he had the satisfaction of finding that both of the Matthews were badly beaten, and he was Colonel Crockett.

At the next election he became a candidate for the State Leg-

islature. Electioneering was a new business to him, and he felt somewhat doubtful as to his success, knowing but little, if anything, about "government." Like many another man, though, while not claiming to know more than he did, he did not tell exactly how much he did not know; the result was that nobody thought anything about it, being satisfied that a man who could



CROCKETT ON THE STUMP.

make such entertaining speeches, tell such capital stories, and then lead the way to a neighboring bar, was the man to represent them. But Col. Crockett was not satisfied with himself; he was anxious to know as much about government as any other representative of the people. Arrived at the capital and duly recognized, he found his brother legislators continually introducing bills, and became possessed with the idea that he must do the same. A friend drafted one for him, and he arose and confidently

presented it to the consideration of the house. A member who opposed it alluded to Col. Crockett in a disparaging way; but if ever a man regretted lack of courtesy towards an opponent, this one did; for thus called upon to answer, the mighty hunter poured forth such a flood of backwoods eloquence that the whole assembly roared with laughter; he ended by comparing this opponent to "an old coon dog barking up the wrong tree."

Before his election, he had built a large grist-mill, with powder-mill and distillery near by; the buildings for these three purposes costing about three thousand dollars. This was more than he had, but he trusted to the profits of his business to enable him to pay off the debt thus contracted. During his absence at the capital, however, a freshet swept away the buildings, and he was ruined. On his return, his wife, much to his pleasure, said to him:

"Just pay up, as long as you have a bit's worth in the world; then everybody will be satisfied and we will scuffle for more."

Taking this advice, he disposed of the negroes that he owned, and everything else available for the purpose, and prepared to go still farther west. His new location was near or in that part of the country known as the "Shakes," from the frequent, though light shocks felt there after the New Madrid earthquake of 1812. He was accompanied only by his eldest son, still a boy, and a young man. Building a cabin and clearing a small space, he put in a crop of corn, and while it was growing indulged in his favorite sport of hunting. "Betsy," as he called his old, roughly-fashioned rifle, was the companion of many a long day spent in the woods; Betsy never told him a lie, but always sent a ball just where he told her; Betsy killed six deer in one day in that game abounding country; and during that spring as many as ten bears fell before her. A called session of the Legislature summoned him soon after he got in his crop, and on his return he brought his family to his new home. The latter part of October, 1822, saw the little family, with two heavily laden pack-horses, traveling yet farther into the "far West;" in front of this little party, humming a song, walked a cheerful, light-hearted woodsman, carrying a child on one arm and a rifle with the other, and followed by half a dozen dogs.

For two months things went on well at that little cabin in the woods, seven miles from the nearest house, and fifteen miles from the next nearest neighbor. "Betsy" kept them supplied with an

abundance of meat; but at last, near Christmas, there was danger of starvation, for the stock of powder gave out. Not only did it mean no more game, but no Christmas guns could be fired. Col. Crockett knew that a keg of powder had been left at his brother-in-law's house for him, on the opposite side of a stream called Rutherford's Fork, and determined to get it. Unusually heavy rains had swollen the little river so that it was about a mile wide, stretching from hill to hill. There were no bridges, and either he had no boat, or it could not be used in the long stretch of shallow water. He "learned then," to use his own words, "how much anybody could suffer and not die." Walking for about a quarter of a mile through snow four inches deep, he came to that vast expanse of water. Through this he waded and swam, holding aloft on his gun the bundle of dry clothes. So cold was he when he emerged, that, trying to run, in order to get warm, he found it impossible to move his foot its own length. But, as he records, he got the powder, though he was obliged to stay three or four days on the other side of the river, and crossing on the ice, broke through more than once. Undaunted by what he had undergone, as he neared the home side of the stream he saw what he thought was a bear's trail, and determined to follow up his favorite game. The animal had evidently broken through the ice, and, disgusted with the cold bath, returned to land. Following the trail, it led him to his own door, and proved to be that of a young man sent by his wife to search for him; her intense anxiety telling her that he must have been drowned or frozen.

A heavy rain that night, turning to sleet, was followed in the morning by the "southerly wind and a cloudy sky" so favorable for hunting, and Crockett, his brother-in-law, and the young man living with him, started out. Before long they separated, he preferring to look for larger game than they. Two wild turkeys were killed early in the day by "Betsy," and with these on his shoulder the hunter continued his search for bears. The dogs soon gave the alarm, but on looking up the tree where they were barking he came to the conclusion that it was a turkey which had flown away. The false alarm was given several times, and he had about made up his mind to shoot the hound that was foremost, when he saw a bear of extraordinary size. So large was he that the dogs were afraid to attack him, and when they had seemed to be barking up the wrong tree, had only been enticing

their master onwards. So dark had it grown, that he was hardly able to see the animal, or there would have been less difficulty in despatching it; but after a severe encounter, in which he stabbed the bear again and again, and his own clothes were torn and covered with blood, the huge, clumsy animal lay dead.

Having on hand a number of skins, he set out, in company with his eldest son, who seems to have been a favorite companion, towards a town forty miles away, to trade for groceries. Here he met with some of his old acquaintances of political life, who urged



CROCKETT'S FIGHT WITH A BEAR.

him to become again a candidate for his old office from this new district; but he refused positively to do so.

"I live down in the cane," he said, "forty miles from town, and nobody knows me in this district as they did in the other."

He thought this was decisive, but it seems that his old comrades thought otherwise. About a week afterwards, a passing traveler stopped at the cabin in the cane, and showed the family there a newspaper in which Col. David Crockett was announced as a candidate for the Legislature. It was a clear case of the office seeking the man, but the man was at first disposed to regard it as a joke that was being played on him. Our hero was never loath

to enter into any fun, and soon determined to have the best of it. Hiring a young man to work on his farm, he started out electioneering, and the district soon rang with the praises of the great bear-hunter, the man from the cane. There had been three candidates in the field, but Crockett made things so hot that in March they held a caucus to decide which should remain in the lists. The strength of the three was concentrated on Dr. Butler, a nephew by marriage of the great Tennessean, Gen. Jackson. Meeting this gentleman at one of the large gatherings, Crockett hailed him with:

“Well, doctor, I suppose they have weighed you out to me; but I should like to know why they fixed your election for March instead of August. This is a branfire new way of doing business, if a caucus is to make a representative for the people.”

Thinking to poke fun at Crockett, he answered: “Where did you spring from, Colonel?”

“O, I’ve just crept out from the cane, to see what discoveries I could make among the white people. You think you have greatly the advantage of me; it’s true I live forty miles from any settlement; I am very poor, and you are very rich; you see, it takes two coon-skins here to buy a quart, but I’ve good dogs, and my little boys at home will go their death to support my election; they are mighty industrious; they hunt every night until twelve o’clock, but it keeps the little fellows mighty busy to keep me in whiskey. When they get tired, I takes my rifle and goes out and kills a wolf, and the state pays me three dollars for the scalp; so one way or another I keep knocking along.”

“Well, Colonel,” rejoined Dr. Butler, “I see you can beat me electioneering.”

“You don’t call this electioneering, do you? When you see me electioneering I go fixed for it: I’ve got a hunting shirt with two pockets in it that will hold half a peck apiece; and I puts a bottle in one, and a big plug in the other, for I never like to leave a man worse off ’n I found him. When I meets a friend, I gives him a pull at the bottle; he’ll be mighty apt, before he drinks, to throw away his tobacco; so when he’s done, I pulls out my big twist and gives him a chaw. Then he ain’t likely to find fault, as he would if he’d a lost his tobacco; and I’ll be mighty apt to get his vote, I reckon.”

But this entire absence of pretense, this blunt acknowledgment of bluntness, was the most successful kind of electioneering. The

crowd was in a roar of laughter at the discomfiture of the eloquent gentleman, and the rough humor of the backwoodsman. Nor did their admiration at all diminish; it carried him safely through the election, his majority over all three candidates (two others had come out between March and August) being nearly two hundred and fifty.

He served this time in the Legislature for two years, 1823 and 1824. In the earlier part of his term, his independence of party trammels and soldiers' prejudices was manifested by his vote for U. S. Senator, when the candidates were Senator Miller and Gen. Jackson. Mr. Miller had served the state well, and even the enthusiasm of a soldier for his old commander, of a Tennessean for Andrew Jackson, could not make David Crockett vote against one whom he knew to be well qualified. But while this course preserved his self-respect, it lost him many friends, and may have assisted, two years later, to cause his political defeat. But ten years afterwards he would not acknowledge himself in the wrong.

The defeat mentioned was in this way: urged to run for Congress, he at first refused, but was afterwards induced to consent. The representative at that time was the opposing candidate, and by reason of a factitious popularity arising from the increase in the price of cotton and his vote on the tariff question, succeeded in beating the "gentlemen from the cane" by two votes. Many persons believed that the election had not been fairly conducted; the action of one officer, at least, in charge of a ballot-box, giving room for suspicion; but so far was Col. Crockett from wishing to contest the election, that he said to some friends who represented that he would probably secure the seat in that way: "If it is not the wish of the people, clearly expressed, I don't want to serve them."

Back to his farm, then, he went, and occupied his time in working there, and in his favorite pursuit of bear hunting. In the fall of 1825, he concluded to build two large boats and load them with pipe-staves for market, but met with characteristic interruptions. Working steadily on until the bears got fat, he started out on a hunting tour, in order to supply his family with meat for the winter. Hardly has this been salted down, and the hunter settled to boat-building again, when a neighbor, living some twenty-five miles away, came to ask him to go bear-hunting in that part of the country. As may be imagined, Crockett readily consented, and they set out together. During an absence of two weeks,

they killed fifteen bears, thus supplying the neighbor's family with their winter meat. Nor was this the only hunt undertaken for others. Returning home, he worked for a while on the boats, and in getting staves, but before many days longed for the companionship of Betsy. Starting out with his little son, the first day they disposed of eight bears. While the two were looking for water and a good place to camp, they came upon a poor fellow who was grubbing, as it turned out, for another man, in order to earn meat for his family. Crockett, knowing what hard and poorly paid work this was, induced the man to accompany him on his hunt, and assist in salting down the flesh of the animals that they should kill. During the week they killed seventeen bears, the grubber being enriched with over a thousand pounds of excellent meat. Hardly had Crockett returned home, when he started out again to hunt with a neighbor. Such an invitation was never refused, whatever reasons there may have been for remaining at home; his love of the sport and his obliging good nature rendered it impossible to say no, when any man said: "Come and hunt bears for me."

But hunting was over for the season, and Crockett was free to attend to his business. Having about thirty thousand staves and two good boats, he engaged a crew, and set off to New Orleans. When they got upon the Mississippi, and found that the pilot was wholly ignorant of the treacherous stream, all were considerably alarmed; the brave hunter, according to his own candid confession, believing himself a little worse scared than anybody else. Lashing the boats together for greater safety, they only made matters worse by rendering them unmanageable, and were obliged to let the current carry them whither it would. Then it was that the superior safety and pleasure of bear-hunting became more apparent to him who had never doubted. Sitting in the little cabin of the hinder boat (for since they were lashed together they went broad-side down the stream) he heard great confusion among the crew. The current had carried the two boats against an island, where great quantities of driftwood had lodged, and the next thing would be the submergence of the upper boat. This was already turned so that it was impossible to get out at the hatchway, and the only other means of exit, a hole at the side, was very small. The efforts of the crew to rescue their commander were successful, however, and he was pulled through this hole; although his shirt was torn from him, and his body very

much abraded. Hardly had he touched the other boat when that from which he had just escaped was drawn under the seething mass of yellow water. All night they were on that raft of drift-wood, four of them bare-headed, three of them bare-footed, our hero being one of these last. So great was his sense of gratitude



SHIPWRECKED ON THE RIVER.

for life, however, his relief at the escape from the immediate danger, that he almost forgot the discomforts of his position, and "felt prime."

Early in the morning they hailed a passing boat, which sent a skiff to their relief. On this boat they returned to Memphis, where a friend in need provided them with clothes and money for the rest of their journey. Having lost his boats and their lading, all his clothes but those that he wore, and nearly lost his life, Crockett arrived at home, thoroughly disgusted with boating, and gave himself up to electioneering, as another representative in the national councils was to be chosen the next August.

There were three principal candidates in the district where our interest centers; one being Col. Alexander, and another, General Arnold. These two gentlemen seemed to regard themselves

as the only important candidates, replying to each other's campaign speeches at considerable length, and thinking beneath their notice the third man, the bear-hunter. But the people knew that as surely as the muddy Mississippi's alluvial deposits enriched their land, this untaught son of the backwoods was the best man to protect their interests, and by an overwhelming majority at the polls rebuked the conceit of his more polished competitors.

His fame as a humorist had preceded him, and if an anonymous biographer, writing about 1832, is to be believed, hotel-keepers and transportation companies considered him such an attraction that each was anxious to secure his patronage. But although his ready humor was the foundation of his fame, his time at the national capitol was not spent idly. Faithful, hard work for his constituents was his idea of his duty, and he endeavored to carry it out. The details would be of interest only to the historian of that section of Tennessee at that particular period ; but the general fact is of importance to his biographer. His efforts were chiefly directed to those internal improvements which he knew were so much needed in his district, and it was a great disappointment to find that Gen. Jackson was not in sympathy with him. Coming from his backwoods cabin in Tennessee to be a courted guest in Washington society, where the originality of his character was fully appreciated, received at the White House by the Chief Executive, the sudden change did not dazzle him. Close observation of others taught him the manners of those in his new position, and the graces of the society gentleman sat easily upon the bear hunter. Still, through all, the fact was apparent that this polish intensified the luster of a true jewel, instead of giving false value to a pebble. "A man's a man for a' that," and he defended the manhood in him by opposing his old commander whom he thought in the wrong. This was highly resented by his constituents, and many politicians and newspapers devoted to Jackson so exaggerated his defection that at the next election he was defeated by a small majority.

He had served two consecutive terms in Congress, returning to the plow after each session as calmly as ever did Cincinnatus or our own Washington ; and when the verdict of the people was made known to him after his election in 1830, he coolly accepted the situation, and went on with his work. Every effort had been made by Jackson's worshipers to secure his defeat at this time, but success did not satisfy them. Gerrymandering secured such

a division of his old district at the next session of the Legislature that it seemed to them that the next election would give them an easy victory; but they reckoned without their host. Their previous success had been partly due to their practice of making appointments for Crockett to speak, and carefully keeping it from him; at the time set, his opponents would rise and say to the crowd that had assembled, that he had refused to speak, being afraid of the result. He only heard of their pursuing this course when it was too late to counteract it, and the result was his defeat. Before the next election, however, the minds of men were calmer, and ready to listen to both sides of the question; and the result was an easy victory for Crockett.

He had not been long in Washington after the beginning of his third term when his physician advised him to take a pleasure-trip for the benefit of his health. So well had he been pleased with his brother members from the northern part of the country that he determined to see them in their homes. Baltimore was visited on his journey northward, the strange sight of a railway train here meeting his eyes for the first time. Approaching Philadelphia by water, he was on deck when three flags were run up. He enquired the meaning.

"O," said the captain, "I'd promised some friends to let them know if you were on board."

To the man who, on reaching Baltimore, had recognized a great city as a place where any one would be made to feel his own unimportance, this was a revelation. The idea that any one should care about his coming to this strange place was astonishing. As the boat neared the shore, he saw one vast "sea of up-turned faces;" a gesture from the captain pointed out to them the lion of the day and a rousing cheer for Davy Crockett saluted his ears.

"Give us the hand of an honest man," cried the people, crowding around him as he stepped on shore. But this recognition was not all that awaited him. The most cordial hospitality of the Quaker City was extended to him by her most honored sons. The anti-Jackson man from Tennessee was hailed with delight by the Whigs of the North, who greeted his defection from his party as an evidence of that party's weakness. Speech after speech from him was demanded by the crowd wherever he went, and although he often tried to escape their importunity, his good-nature always yielded. Some gentlemen presented him with a seal val-

ued at forty dollars ; the device being two race-horses, evidently at the top of their speed, and the motto that to which our hero had clung, whether bear-hunting or law-making, whether clinging, half-naked, through the winter night, to a raft of driftwood in the Mississippi, or sitting, an honored guest, at the President's table : " Go ahead." Tradition has it, that when a suitor of his daughter approached him by letter, about this time, he replied :

" DEAR SIR : I have received your letter. Go ahead.

DAVID CROCKETT."

Whether this were known at the time or not, the motto was generally recognized as suited to the man, and the seal was copied by many of his fellow Congressmen. A club of young Whigs, desiring to present him with a handsome rifle, secured from him directions as to the size and kind that he preferred, and the order was given to the manufacturer. Dinners were tendered him in abundance, and everywhere the greatest eagerness to entertain him prevailed. In New York the same flattering reception awaited him, and Boston did not lag behind her sister cities. An invitation to visit Harvard, however, he flatly refused to accept. The authorities of that institution had recently conferred upon President Jackson the title of doctor of laws ; Crockett claimed to possess no degree and to wish for none " but a slight degree of common-sense ;" one such doctor was enough for the state ; the people of his district interpreted LL.D. as " lazy, lounging dunce ;" and he had no mind to run the risk of going to Cambridge, although he would spell with any of them as far as " crucifix," where he had left off at school.

Returning to Washington, he served the remainder of his term, and started home in good spirits with the handsome rifle which had been presented to him. His course was rather a round-about one, as he took Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and Louisville on the way, but he was none the less glad to get home to his little cabin in the cane—his own home, his own land, his own beloved ones. Here he lived, until the congressional campaign of 1835 opened, when he again took the field against a Jackson man. This was Adam Huntsman, a crippled soldier, whose services were made much of to the voters of the district. This nomination was secured by a practical joke, which illustrates the ready wit of the great hunter.

Strolling up to a political meeting one day, with his rifle on his shoulder, Crockett was soon addressing the crowd. The free

and independent voters lost no time in informing him that listening to speeches was dry work, and that there was plenty of liquor in a shanty near by. This had been built by a Yankee, and stocked for that special occasion. So experienced a canvasser as Crockett took the hint immediately, and leading the way to Job Snelling's bar, called for a quart; that worthy called his attention to a sign: "Pay to-day, trust to-morrow," and refused to fill the order without the money. This Crockett did not have, and the crowd that had gathered around him rapidly dispersed to seek his better provided rival. But although he was without money, he had no difficulty in finding a ready substitute. Plunging into the woods, he had the good fortune to see, in a very short time, a fine fat coon. A well-aimed shot secured the prize, and back to the crowd he went. A coon-skin is not money, but was then and there recognized as the equivalent of a quart of rum, so that when Crockett threw it upon the rough counter, Snelling, without any hesitation, set out a bottle. This was soon disposed of, and the crowd listened to the speaker. They soon became clamorous for more liquor, however, and Davy, reflecting how long his speech must last if he had to go and kill a coon so often, led the way to the bar. His quick eye and ready wit found him a way out of the difficulty; Snelling had thrown the coon skin under the counter, and Crockett, drawing it thence by the tail, which protruded beyond the logs, gravely presented it in payment for a second quart. Job was not at all popular in that country, as he was always on the alert to make money off the people, and this they did not relish; so, though the trick was seen by many, no one betrayed the joker. The story circulated through the assembly, and made the liquor all the better. Again and again did they drink, the same coon-skin serving for payment, until, at the close of the day, ten quarts of rum had been consumed. The story went the rounds of the district, and the people concluded that a man sharp enough to trick Job Snelling was a better man to look after their interests than any war-worn veteran that ever lost a leg. After the election, Crockett went privately to Snelling and offered him the price of the rum.

"Wal, neow, Colonel," responded that honest individual, "I guess I won't take your money. You see, I like to be tricked once in a while; it keeps me from gittin' to think I'm tew all-fired smart."

He had charged the nine quarts to the other candidate, who

paid the bill, not knowing exactly how much might have been drunk at his expense.

Contrary to all expectation, however, Crockett was beaten by over two hundred votes. This was attributed by him to unfairness of the judges, and to bribery by certain enthusiastic Jackson men. Even at that early day, the charge of corruption was not unheard or unfounded; and even the President could stoop to electioneer for a dependent. Nor was the unsuccessful candidate at all backward at expressing his opinions to his late constituents; he told them what he thought about the fairness of the election, and warned them of the ruin towards which the country was going, as directed by Jackson and the "Little Flying Dutchman," Van Buren; concluding by telling them to go to—Hades (only he didn't use the Greek) and he would go to Texas.

Settling up his affairs as well as he could, and leaving his family well provided with food, he started out with his trusty rifle, to join in the struggle of the Texan patriots for freedom. Cordially received and well entertained at Little Rock, where he stopped for a few days, he proceeded on his journey. Embarking on a steamboat upon the Red River, he watched a game of thimble-rig, and finally made a bet with the trickster. Winning this, he refused to play any more, but by degrees acquired considerable influence over the man. Crockett learned that he had been educated "as a gentleman," and suddenly thrown on his own resources. One disreputable way of earning a livelihood had succeeded another, until now, when he earned a scanty living by this mode of cheating. Crockett took him to task in a friendly manner, and tried to shame him out of his evil practices, but he answered that it was of no use to try; he could not live like an honest man.

"Then die like a brave one," exclaimed his enthusiastic mentor. "Most men are remembered as they died, and not as they lived. Come with me to Texas; cut aloof from your degrading habits and associates here, and in fighting with the Texans for their freedom, regain your own."

Starting up, and striding two or three times across the room, the outcast stopped before his friend, and answered, with an oath:

"I'll be a man again—live honestly, or die bravely. I'll go with you to Texas."

He held to this resolution, and Crockett being determined, as

usual, to "go ahead," they set out in company early in the morning after their landing. Stopping at night at a small tavern, they noticed, leaning against a tree, what might be called a backwoods dandy. This was the "Bee-hunter," introduced to them more favorably by the little incident that occurred early in the



CROCKETT'S FIRST BUFFALO HUNT.

morning. A blustering, swaggering fellow, who imagined that the young man had, on some previous occasion, insulted him, approached him with the most offensive expressions. The Bee-hunter gave him no satisfaction for a long time, but at last, springing upon him, carried him to the pump, and there washed

all the fight out of him by a stream of water. With this hero Crockett and Thimblerig concluded to travel, especially when they found that he was an excellent guide across the prairies.

The trio was soon separated, however; the Bee-hunter rode off suddenly, and apparently without cause; Crockett, soon afterward, saw a herd of buffaloes, and gave chase, and poor Thim-



DESPERATE FIGHT WITH A COUGAR.

blerig was left alone on the prairie. The buffaloes proved too swift for Crockett's mustang, and although he might have easily retraced his steps, it was always his principle to go ahead, and he would not turn back. Concluding that it would be impossible for him to return that night, he looked about him for a lodging place, and had selected the leafy branches of a tree, prostrated by a recent storm, when a low growl warned him that it

was already occupied. In a moment more an immense Mexican cougar showed itself. Finding a ball from his rifle produced but little effect, Crockett clubbed his gun, but all his strength was not sufficient for the destruction of the animal. Seizing his hunting-knife, he slashed away at the creature, that, mad with the wound, fought as only a cougar could; but at last it was stretched dead at his feet. Hardly had this enemy been despatched than he was alarmed by the approach of a large party of Indians; but they proved friendly, and guided him back to the route. As they approached a camp, they saw, seated by the fire, a solitary man busily engaged in some absorbing pastime. Drawing nearer,



GENERAL COS.

Crockett recognized Thimble-
rig at his old occupation. The chief sounded the war-whoop, the warriors echoed it, and poor Thimblerig sprang to his feet in terror. Crockett reassured him, and the Indians rode off, the chief happy in the gift of a bowie-knife from a white man whom he knew by the adventure with the cougar to be a brave and skillful hunter.

The Bee-hunter, Thimblerig said, had returned laden with honey; his apparently inexplicable conduct being explained by his having seen a single bee winging its way to the hive; he was now hunting, in order to obtain meat for their supper, and soon returned to the camp with a wild turkey. Having cooked this, they were at supper with two others who had joined their party, when a company of fifteen or twenty horsemen appeared at a distance. The announcement from one of the strangers that these were Mexicans was followed by his description of them as ruffianly cowards. This was borne out by their conduct when the Americans returned their first fire. Flying like a cloud before the wind, they were pursued in hot haste, but succeeded in eluding the chase. Being now in sight of the independent flag flying over the fortress of the Alamo, our three heroes bent their way thither, and were welcomed by the shouts of the patriots.

The garrison of only about one hundred and fifty men was commanded by Col. Travis, the famous Col. Bowie being also

present. The Mexican general, Santa Anna, was extremely anxious to obtain possession of the fortress again, as he considered its surrender to the Texans early in December, 1835, extremely disgraceful, although General Cos had been allowed to state his own terms of capitulation. The Americans even then were expecting an attack, an anticipation only too well realized. Wandering hunters brought information of the movements of an attacking force. February 22, 1836, about sixteen hundred Mexicans, headed by Santa Anna himself, approached within two



STORMING OF THE ALAMO.

miles of the Alamo. The scouts reported that the assailants had endeavored to excite the Indians to hostilities against the Americans, but that the Comanches held the Mexicans in such contempt that these efforts were of no avail. Early on the morning of the twenty-third, the enemy came in sight, marching in regular order, and trying to display their force to the greatest possible advantage, to terrify the garrison. But men who take up arms to fight for liberty are not easily frightened, and the garrison withdrew in good order from the town to the citadel, resolving to defend it to the last. All their stores had been taken there on the first alarm. The Texan flag was raised—thirteen stripes of red and white alternating on a blue ground, with a large white star and the word *Texas* in the center.

The enemy marched into the town under a flag whose bloody hue proclaimed the merciless treatment that would be the lot of the patriots, if they surrendered. A messenger came in the afternoon to demand an unconditional and immediate surrender, but was answered by a cannon-shot. The Mexicans replied to this by a heavy fire, which was continued for many days. The Texan sharp-shooters made considerable havoc among the Mex-



DEFENCE OF THE ALAMO.

icans, and were unhurt by their cannonading. Daily reinforcements came to the enemy, but the garrison, hoping for aid from two places, Goliad and Refugio, to which messengers had been sent, kept up hope. On the third of March, however, they despaired of assistance from without, and Col. Travis exhorted them, in case the enemy should carry the fort, to fight to the last gasp, and render the victory as serious to the victors as to the vanquished. Three hearty cheers approved this course.

On the following day the messenger who had been despatched to Goliad and Refugio was seen running toward the fort hard pressed by half a dozen of the Mexican cavalry. Crockett, the Bee-hunter and two others, sallied out to his relief, and after a slight skirmish with the pursuers, chased them so far, in the ar-

dor of the moment, that their retreat was cut off by another body of cavalry, which got between them and the fort. There was no course open to the Americans but to fight their way through. "Go ahead!" shouted Col. Crockett. There were about twenty of the Mexicans, and they fought savagely until a larger detachment issued from the fort, when they retreated, leaving eight dead upon the field. The messenger and the Bee-hunter were mortally wounded, the former dying before they entered the fort. The latter, whose songs and jests had so often raised the spirits of the garrison, as his manly, unassuming piety had excited their admiration, died about midnight, a sigh for his betrothed escaping him as he sang:

"But toom cam' the saddle, all bludy to see,
And hame cam' the steed, but hame never cam' he."

It was the last song she had sung to him, before he left her for the Alamo.

The autobiography of David Crockett is the principal source of information in regard to these last days in the fortress. Under the date of March 5, 1836, we find this entry:

"Pop, pop, pop! Boom, boom, boom! throughout the day. No time for memorandums now. Go ahead! Liberty and independence forever!"

That is the last. Before daybreak, on the sixth, the whole Mexican force assaulted the fortress, Santa Anna commanding. The battle raged fiercely until daylight, when only six men, of whom Col. Crockett was one, were left alive in the fort. These were surrounded, and, knowing resistance was useless, were compelled to yield. Gen. Castrillon, to whom they surrendered, was brave but not cruel, and wishing to save the prisoners, went to Santa Anna to ask for orders. "No quarter," had been the command, but Castrillon hoped that these few might be spared. With steady and firm step Col. Crockett followed the humaner Mexican to his superior's presence, looking full and fearlessly into the cruel commander's eye.

"Your excellency," said Castrillon, "here are six prisoners I have taken alive; how shall I dispose of them?"

Looking at the general fiercely, Santa Anna answered, in a violent rage:

"Have I not told you how to dispose of them? Why do you bring them to me?"

The murderous crew around him wanted no other orders to

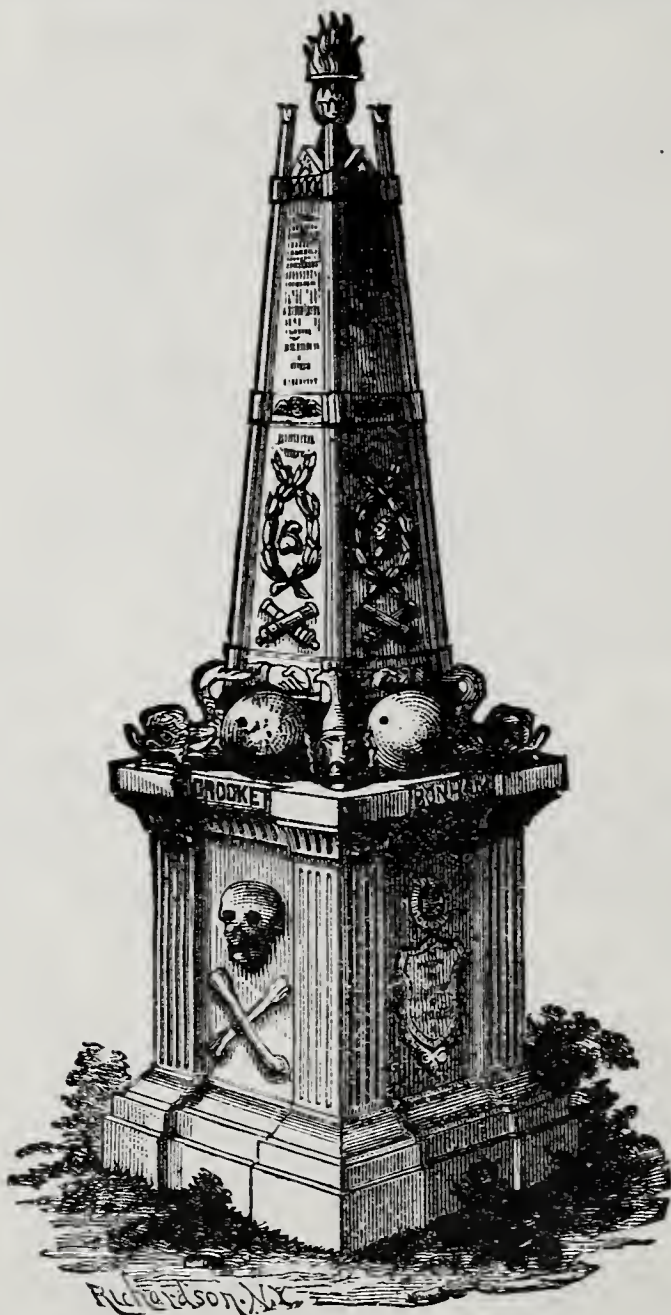
DEATH OF CROCKETT.



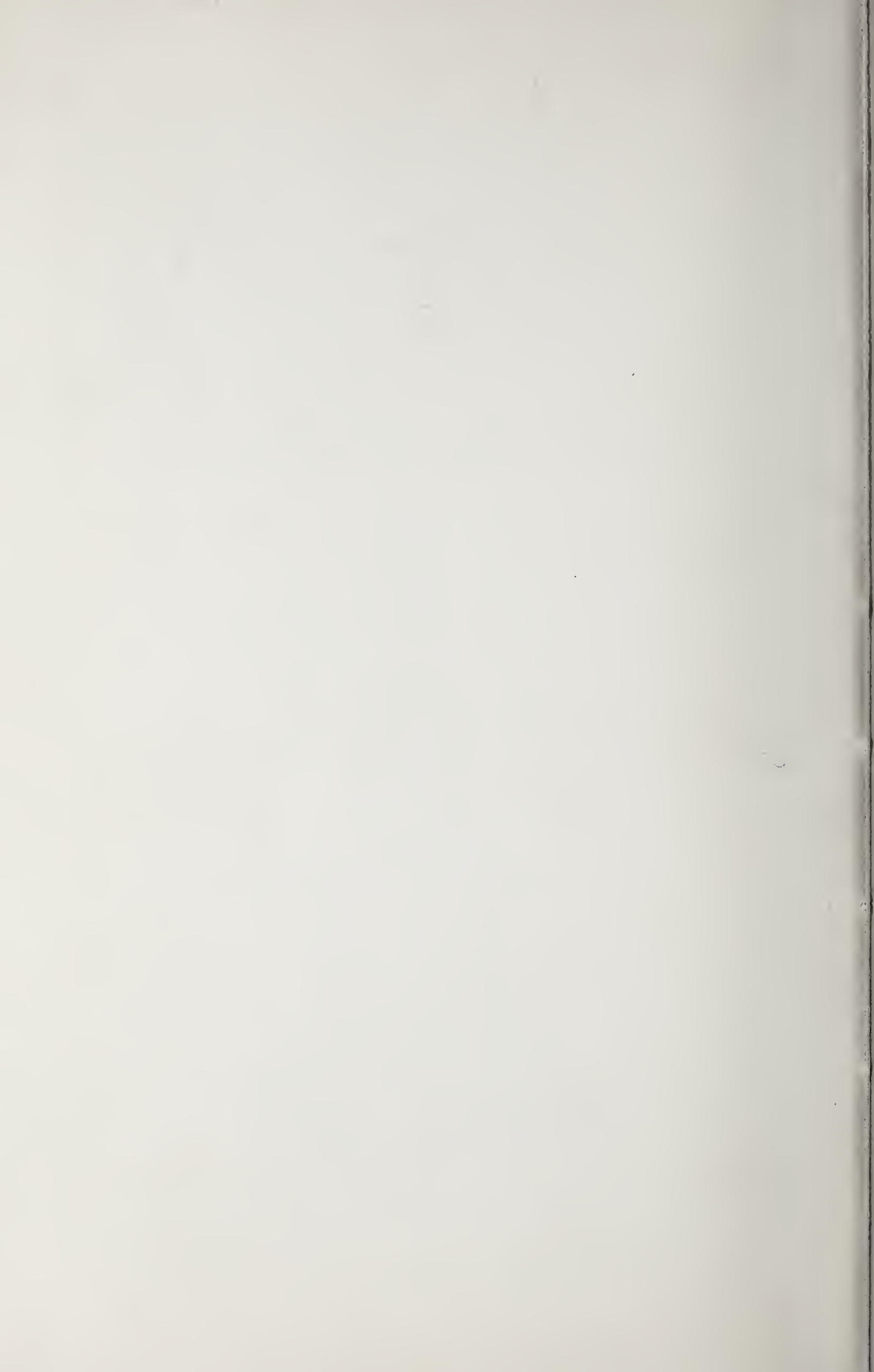
fall upon the defenseless prisoners. Col. Crockett sprang forward like a tiger at the ruffian, but a dozen swords were sheathed in his heart. Without a groan, with a frown upon his brow, but a smile on his lips, he died.

This is, for us, the end of the story. With that battle, when the Texans, crying "Remember the Alamo," swept down like a hurricane upon the Mexicans, with their final triumph in the struggle for independence, and subsequent annexation to the United States, we have nothing to do. The sixth of March, 1836, ends the life of an honest man, who served his country as best he could, who never refused to serve a fellow-creature, and who died fighting for another people.

"Each of the heroes around thee had fought for his land and his line,
But thou hast fought for a stranger, in hate of a wrong not thine."



MONUMENT TO THE DEFENDERS OF THE ALAMO.





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